

Employers seeking talent



*Quebec City: room to develop your talents*

**PRATICAL  
IMMIGRATION GUIDE**

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## Foreword

The current operating environment for Quebec companies is characterized by market and economic globalization, worldwide competition, cultural pluralism and globalized consumer tastes. In light of Quebec's unique demographic context, a growing number of businesses and other organizations are dealing with cultural diversity while putting in place appropriate strategies to meet their workforce requirements. They are also striving to remain competitive while addressing crucial issues of labour quality and availability.

Hiring and integrating immigrants or members of visible minorities is a key strategy in meeting these new challenges and pursuing growth objectives. However, businesses must also adapt their human resources practices if they are to effectively integrate qualified immigrant workers.

Immigration serves to enhance Quebec's openness to the world by bringing in foreign workers with a broad range of technical and cultural skills. But the growing number of visible and cultural minorities in the workplace also raises issues of employee management and human relations that merit further attention. New HR practices must be developed to facilitate immigrant workers' professional integration. Adopting new practices will help companies to develop new approaches, revamp certain processes, enhance their ability to attract prospective workers and hire, integrate, retain and motivate their employees.

Making these changes will require preparation and proven methods based on experience—the very perspective from which this guide was written. This document should be viewed as a tool to assist businesses in their efforts to recruit immigrant workers and facilitate their professional integration. It contains a set of best practices designed to facilitate the success of a culturally diverse workplace. Although cultural diversity is an undeniable asset, it remains a mystifying and poorly understood phenomenon for many companies in the Quebec City region.

POLE Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches prioritizes the development of high-growth firms in targeted sectors of excellence in the Quebec City region (applied technologies, health and nutrition and manufacturing). This guide was produced in collaboration with leading regional and governmental immigration stakeholders and was written by a team of immigration and HR specialists. It is our hope that this document will help employers meet the twin challenges of ensuring qualified worker availability throughout the region and finding the right people to bring their projects to fruition.

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The information in this guide was compiled from multiple sources and updated in October 2009. It is in no way intended to replace any legal requirements, policy statements or official programs. This guide may not be modified without the complete approval of Akova Inc. and POLE Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches.

All excerpts from this guide must cite the source.

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## **Essential guides, tools and documents**

*Business Critical: Maximizing the Talents of Visible Minorities—An Employer's Guide* - Conference Board of Canada

The following are useful tools [French only]:

- Communications interculturelles – les 10 plus importantes sources de malentendus
- Ayez conscience de vos préjugés
- Élargissez vos stratégies de recrutement
- Savoir lire les signes – guide de l'intervieweur
- Pour un processus de sélection impartial

***Guide pratique de la gestion de la diversité interculturelle*** - Emploi-Quebec [French only]

***Guide pratique de recherche d'emploi*** - Emploi-Quebec [French only]

***L'immigration au Québec – Partage des responsabilités Québec - Canada – Statuts des personnes se trouvant au Québec – Catégories d'immigration*** – Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

***Pour enrichir le Québec - Intégrer mieux*** - Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) [French only]

***Réussir l'intégration des personnes immigrantes en entreprise*** - Emploi-Quebec Outaouais, Immigration-Quebec –Outaouais Regional Branch [French only]

***Diversity at Work: Eight steps for small and medium-sized businesses*** – European Union

***La pratique des affaires Québec vs France*** - ERAI - Entreprises Rhône Alpes International [French only]

***S'installer et travailler au Québec*** – 5th edition - 2009-2010 - Laurence Nadeau Collection: Express Emploi [French only]

## Websites:

Emploi-Quebec: [www.emploiquebec.net](http://www.emploiquebec.net)

Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC): [www.micc.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca)

City of Quebec: [www.ville.quebec.qc.ca](http://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca)

Quebec City Chamber of Commerce: [www.ccquebec.ca](http://www.ccquebec.ca) and [www.emplois-immigrants.com](http://www.emplois-immigrants.com)

Voice of English-speaking Québec: [www.veq.ca](http://www.veq.ca)

Orientation and Integration Service for Immigrant Workers (SOIIT): [www.soiit.qc.ca](http://www.soiit.qc.ca)

Quebec Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE):  
[www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.mdeie.gouv.qc.ca)

[www.embaucheimmigrants.ca](http://www.embaucheimmigrants.ca)

French Immigration and Integration Office (OFII): [www.ofiicanada.ca](http://www.ofiicanada.ca)

Akova blog : [www.akova.wordpress.com](http://www.akova.wordpress.com)

## ***1.1 Immigrant recruitment: a winning strategy***

Why should Quebec companies hire immigrants? It's a valid question that could and should be asked by all employers hoping to tap into a new pool of qualified workers.

Employers would do well to consider the following points and arguments.

### **To address the shortage of qualified workers**

In the province of Quebec and across Canada, the pool of available workers is undergoing significant changes. Quebec is characterized by an aging workforce, a fairly low birth rate, steady economic growth and relatively low unemployment. On top of these factors, large numbers of baby-boomers are retiring—a trend that is set to intensify in the coming years. Moreover, the number of graduates in certain disciplines has failed to keep pace with demand.

In addition to constituting a global source of talent, immigrants are driving the growth of the active population and promoting economic prosperity provincewide.

### **To reap the benefits of wide-ranging international expertise**

New immigrants who have earned degrees and worked in other countries have an international outlook that enhances their understanding of foreign clients and business practices. In terms of potential contributions to your company, immigrant workers can help develop new products and services tailored to the requirements of other cultures. And in terms of sales and international client service, their knowledge of other cultures and languages will allow you to better meet your customers' needs and improve their satisfaction level.

In an increasingly globalized world, your clients, suppliers and partners are multinational. With each passing day, your company faces heightened global competition and a fresh crop of new rivals. To leverage their competitive advantage, Quebec companies can use these diverse cultural skills to establish international networks and forge stronger ties with their business partners.

### **To hire dedicated employees eager to put down new roots**

Generally speaking, immigrants are qualified and well educated. At some point, they decided to leave their native countries and to make a new life for themselves in Quebec. Learning new customs, ways of life, social and business practices—and sometimes a new language—takes courage and determination. Consequently, immigrants are eager to succeed and prove their worth.

Employers who give immigrants a chance to integrate professionally and socially often find that their new employees are loyal, dedicated and reliable; they also develop a strong sense of affiliation with their employer.

### **To foster corporate creativity and innovation**

Hiring immigrants and addressing diversity issues can give companies new insights into change and innovation.

Coexistence and cooperation between people from different walks of life and cultural backgrounds often leads to the generation of creative new ideas. Embracing innovative solutions and re-examining existing processes can foster a positive dynamic leading to the development of new niche markets.

### **To contribute to corporate social responsibility**

The concept of corporate social responsibility is gaining ground across Canada and around the world. It includes ways in which private companies address the economic, social and environmental impacts associated with their operations.

Hiring immigrants is not only a response to the growing demand for qualified workers; it is also necessary for Quebec society as a whole since it helps to offset demographic decline. Your efforts in this regard will enhance your image as a multicultural, forward-looking and socially responsible company.

## **1.2 Evaluating and analyzing immigrants' personal profiles**

Over the past few decades, immigration has been a key driver of Quebec's economic growth, particularly in terms of the active population. But the phenomenon of immigration evolves and data patterns change rapidly.

What factors determine immigrants' choice of country? Why would they choose Canada as their new home? Which aspects of our country do they appreciate the most?

According to *Immigrants' Perspectives on Their First Four Years in Canada*<sup>1</sup>, a 2007 study by Statistics Canada, immigrants above all appreciate liberty and respect for human rights. Security, quality of life, economic prosperity, political stability, peace and religious freedom are key factors behind immigrants' decision to move to Canada.

<sup>1</sup> *Canadian Social Trends April 2007- Immigrants' Perspectives on their First Four Years in Canada*, Grant Schellenberg and H  l  ne Maheux - Statistics Canada

## 1.2.1 Statistical overview and profile of prospective immigrants

### Statistical overview<sup>2</sup>

In 2008, Canada received more than 247,000 immigrants, 45,264 of whom settled in the province of Quebec.

<sup>2</sup> Sources:

- *Bulletin statistique sur l'immigration permanente au Québec* - second quarter 2008 [French only]

- *Immigrants in the Hinterlands*, André Bernard- Perspectives, January 2008 - Statistics Canada, catalogue no. 75001-X

This section includes the latest data provided by Statistics Canada (second quarter of 2009).

### Components of demographic growth by province and territory (Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan)

	July 1, 2008-June 30, 2009				
	Canada	Que.	Ont.	Man.	Sask.
Births	377,703	88,600	140,255	15,690	13,826
Deaths	242,863	56,700	92,152	10,352	9,430
Immigration	245,275	45,735	107,047	13,172	5,989
Emigration	42,924	7,136	20,228	1,563	360
Number of temporary emigrants	20,170	2,829	9,341	577	264
Returning emigrants	25,075	5,244	10,621	756	354
Number of non-permanent residents	70,426	13,161	15,422	279	2,286
Net interprovincial migration		-10,666	-18,738	-1,541	4,108

Source: Statistics Canada, CANSIM, table (for fee) 051-0004.  
Last modified: Sept. 29, 2009.

### Targeted immigration: categories of immigrants

Authorized immigrants to Quebec are generally divided into four categories:

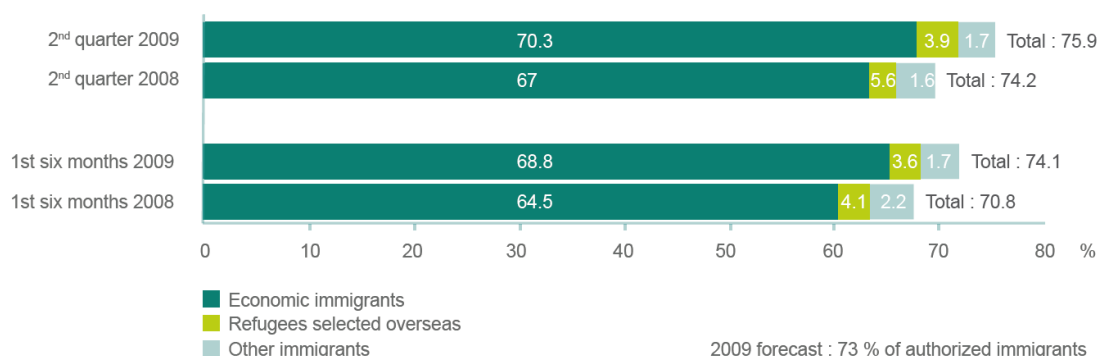
- Economic immigrants
- Family reunification immigrants\*
- Refugees
- Other immigrants

The economic immigrant category is the largest, accounting for approximately 68.8% of immigrants in the second quarter of 2009. It includes primary applicants (i.e. qualified workers), spouses and dependents, as well as entrepreneurs.

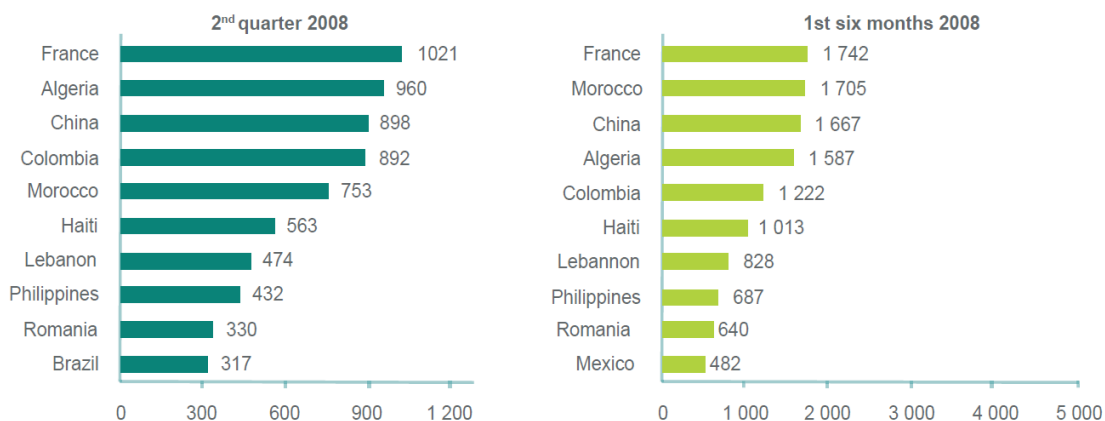
Economic immigrants are chosen based on their skills and their ability to contribute to the Canadian economy; they are divided into clearly defined categories.

### Quebec's share of selected immigrants

2<sup>nd</sup> quarters of 2009 and 2008, first six months of 2009 and 2008



### Immigrants' countries of origin



### Characteristics

Immigrants to Quebec are predominantly young: in 2009, over 70% were under 35, while 20% were between the ages of 35 and 44. They were almost equally divided among women (49.6%) and men (50.4%).

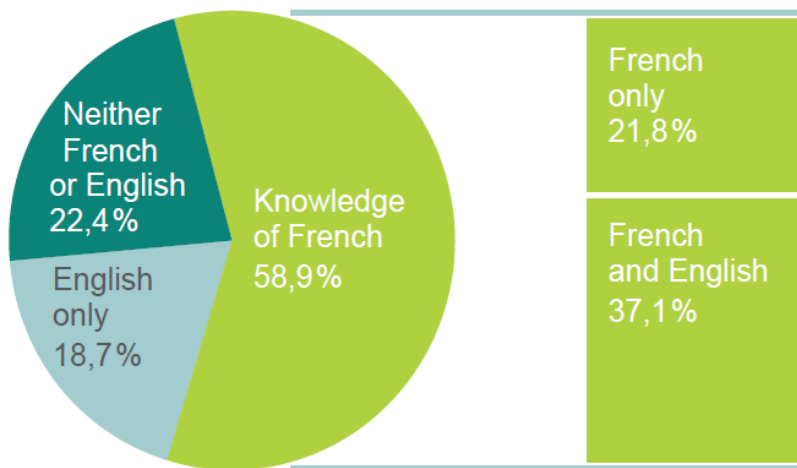
Most of the immigrants selected were well-educated (approximately 65% had completed at least 14 years of schooling) and over 64.5% spoke French fluently upon arrival in Quebec.

## Did you know?

In the second quarter of 2008, nearly 74% of immigrants expressed a desire to settle in Montreal, 6% in Montérégie and 5% in Laval; only 4.6% picked Quebec City.

### Language skills

First six months of 2009 for the province of Quebec



### High-demand professions

Immigrant workers are qualified in the fields of applied sciences, natural sciences, business, finance, administration, social sciences, education, sales and service. They primarily seek employment in those areas.

## Did you know?

A significant majority of immigrants (66%) use the Internet to look for a job.

Email is commonly used for submitting résumés and communicating with HR departments.

## ***1.3 Defining a diversity policy and developing a recruitment plan based on intercultural skills***

### **Defining cultural diversity**

Culture may be defined as a collection of practices, customs and artistic, religious and intellectual achievements that define and distinguish a particular group or society. The term “cultural diversity” reflects the fact that countries usually differ in terms of their ethnic groups, languages, religions, customs and social traditions.

Within a given company, cultural diversity is reflected in the fact that employees come from different ethnic groups, practice a variety of religions, speak French in addition to other languages and have different professional and social customs.

The managerial challenge lies in leveraging this diversity to benefit the company while respecting cultural differences—a source not only of strength but also of potential pitfalls.

### **Incorporating cultural diversity into corporate and managerial values**

The values espoused by a company’s management are fundamental: setting out and promoting a vision, as well as finding people to share and promote it. Entrepreneurs are responsible for championing the values of equality, respect for individual differences, fairness and transparency. They must also account for their motivations and choices and explain why they are embracing cultural diversity with a view to securing the commitment of all employees.

### **Defining a specific cultural diversity policy**

In accordance with your business plan and corporate strategy, senior management should draft and implement a cultural diversity policy, in addition to setting related goals and developing a concrete action plan.

- Begin by analyzing your workforce: background, categories, demographic considerations (age, etc.). This preliminary analysis is a valuable baseline tool for developing a diversity strategy.
- You should then define your policy goals with a view to explaining why you support openness. Your policy should promote diversity by facilitating the hiring of immigrant workers and by recognizing and emphasizing the positive impacts for the company. Fairness is a basic principle that should be promoted to prevent discrimination and ensure that all employees are treated equally.
- Draft a multi-point corporate plan aimed at fostering integration.
- Secure your managers’ involvement and commitment to the process.

Being able to deal with difference is largely based on quality of training received, which should seek above all to validate difference. Managers should be unequivocally committed to the principle of diversity. Embracing difference primarily hinges on a manager’s ability to

analyze cultural realities. It also requires an awareness of how these realities play out in the workplace and how many adjustments may be required. Managers must strive to eliminate obstacles that could prevent individuals from reaching their full potential and to ensure that productivity is optimized. To that end, they must establish mechanisms promoting the values of equality and respect within their teams. Managers must learn to incorporate the concept of difference (and its inherent benefits), as well as legal requirements, into their practices. In other words, they must integrate diversity into your company's business culture.

### **Communicating cultural diversity**

Make an official commitment to cultural diversity and make it known.

Listen to your staff and explain why you are implementing a cultural diversity policy and process.

Promote your cultural diversity commitment on your website, in your official communications and in your job postings.

### **Developing a comprehensive recruitment plan for your company**

A company's HR department is usually responsible for developing the annual recruitment plan, including the number of positions to be filled, job titles and descriptions, planning timeline and budget. As part of this process, the HR department will analyze your staff turnover rate, number of retirements, total staff strength, upcoming contracts and hiring needs.

### **Broadening your recruitment strategies and identifying positions to be filled by immigrants**

For each job function you define, the responsibilities and skill profiles must be analyzed to determine which positions will be filled by immigrants.

You will then need to determine which skills are prerequisites and which skills can be acquired on the job.

## ***1.4 Disparities in labour standards***

In Quebec, decent labour standards and conditions are an essential right of employees and are regulated by law. Please note, however, that legal requirements may vary significantly in other parts of the world; this can sometimes lead to misunderstandings among newcomers hired to work in Quebec.

Although all employees are required to comply with the rules applicable to your company, immigrants who have misconceptions about legal requirements will no doubt need clarification of certain matters.

Although you need not become an expert in the area of labour law, you are advised to ask your HR department to research the main differences between labour standards in Quebec and in other parts of the world. For example, there may be differences in:

- The length of the work week
- The hours of work

- Certain provisions of employment contracts (advance notice, length of probationary period, contract termination procedures, etc.)
- The amount of paid leave and the number of statutory holidays

As a preliminary step, summary information on immigrants' main countries of origin is included in the appendix. These summaries provide an overview of certain differences in the countries that supply Quebec with the most immigrant workers.

## ***1.5 Understanding the importance of cultural differences***

In order to understand and appreciate the potential of your immigrant workers, you should familiarize yourself with a number of cultural differences that are essential to effective communication.

Cultures may differ in terms of:

- Notions of personal space and self-awareness
- Communication style and language
- Dress codes and personal appearance
- Dietary habits
- Notions of time and perception of time
- Social relationships with family, friends and relatives
- Social values and norms
- Beliefs and habits
- Work habits and practices

### **Cultural characteristics of the main countries of origin of immigrants to the Quebec City region**

The country summaries in the appendix provide an overview of the cultural characteristics of the main countries of origin of immigrants to Quebec.

#### **For example:**

In **Belgium**, workplace practices are guided by pragmatism. Belgians tend to be practical and down to earth; they favour dialogue and compromise rather than taking a confrontational approach. This leads them to emphasize discussion aimed at finding compromise and reaching agreement. Hierarchical relationships are relatively well defined and respected.

In **France**, interpersonal contacts are based on respect for the social hierarchy and chronological age. Social rank and job status are seen as very important. Use of the formal "vous" (you) in France is widespread; there is always a certain protocol that must be followed during meetings. Use of first names and the informal "tu" is more frequent in the technology

sector, though relatively uncommon in business relationships. People in France are quick to voice their emotions (either positive or negative) in public.

In the **Maghreb** region of North Africa (primarily **Algeria, Morocco and Tunisia**), interpersonal contacts tend to be very friendly, although it may take longer to earn trust in Algeria than in Morocco. The sense of hierarchy is highly developed and officials are treated with great respect. Use of the formal “vous” in French is customary since it denotes respect; however, this barrier usually breaks down after a little while.

Relationships between men and women are more distant than in Quebec.

### Did you know?

Rephrasing is the best way to avoid miscommunication in a multicultural context. This means restating in your own words what your employees say and making sure that they agree with your interpretation. If they seem confused, rephrase again to ensure that you have been understood.

### Impact of cultural differences in the workplace

Europeans share a set of implicit values stemming from their shared history. Over centuries of existence, European countries have experienced invasions and wars and given rise to major historical movements. Consequently, interpersonal relations are governed by certain tacit rules of courtesy, which non-Europeans may find hard to grasp and which may complicate initial encounters.

For example, in the Latin countries of Europe (e.g. France, Spain, Italy and even Belgium), there are a number of rules of courtesy that must be followed when entering into new relationships (in the “Anglo-Saxon” countries, this process is simpler). In practice, when newcomers from these countries meet Quebecers, they may come across as formal or aloof, while Europeans may find Quebecers unrefined and overly direct.

The Latin countries of Europe maintain a greater hierarchical distance. This means that businesses are more hierarchical as well, with intermediate levels of management and a more centralized decision-making process. Personal initiative is de-emphasized and employees are expected to consult with their immediate supervisors on most decisions. Upon arriving in Quebec, these individuals may feel somewhat bewildered by their freedom of action in the workplace and by the fact that their opinions may not be not only be welcome but required.

It should also be noted that upbringing plays a key role in the construction of individual outlooks, whether positive or negative. Unlike in North America, jobseekers from the Latin countries of Europe have greater difficulty “selling” and promoting themselves. They may be reluctant to accept positions in which risk taking is required since professional failure is viewed much more negatively in their cultures than in North America.

We will conclude this section with a brief discussion of linguistic issues that can occasionally lead to misunderstandings. To ensure clear and effective communications, be especially careful when speaking French with individuals from francophone regions of Europe; this is because linguistic differences may lead to confusion in the workplace. For example, when

Quebecers say “Je vais y penser” (“I’ll think about it”) in order to politely sidestep a topic they may consider irrelevant, Europeans may interpret this as meaning “They’re going to think about it and get back to me”, which could create false hope. And if you ever ask one of your employees to “prendre une chance” (“take a chance”), keep in mind that they could interpret your request as an endorsement of risky behaviour since “prendre une chance” in European French means “prendre un risque” (“take a risk”).

### **Recommended reading**

Mastering cultural differences is a vast topic and requires extensive effort. We recommend the following publications, which should prove useful in this regard.

Daniel Bollinger, Geert Hofstede — *Les différences culturelles dans le management* - Les éditions d’Organisation, 1987 [French only]

Joseph Aoun – *Gérer les différences culturelles* - Éditions MultiMonde, 2004 [French only]

Jean Benoit Nadeau – *Les Français ont aussi un accent and Pas si fou ces Français* - Éditions Payot [French only]

M. Johnson, R.T. Moran – *Faire des affaires en Europe* – Guide Culturel – Topéditions [French only]

Morrison, Conaway & Borden – *Kiss, Bow or Shake Hands: How to do Business in Sixty Countries* – Bob Adams Inc.

Alain Samson – *Mon équipe est multicolore mais je suis daltonien* – Éditions Transcontinental [French only]

Victor Armony – *Le Québec expliqué aux immigrants* – VLB Éditeur [French only]

## Did you know?

- Each culture features a unique set of priorities and values.
- People who speak the same language do not necessarily share the same cultural values.
- A given expression may mean different things in different cultures.
- Each culture has its own rhythm and system of body language.

## Testimonial

Symbiose Technologies is an IT firm specializing in management and strategic consulting and in Web and mobile application development. Founded in 2002, Symbiose has grown markedly in recent years thanks to the expansion of its client base and the launch of a new and highly innovative software line. During this growth period, management has focused on the HR function, not only in terms of employment conditions, but also in terms of the things that make employees feel recognized and valued and ensure that they can reach their full potential.

Like many other companies, we were experiencing recruitment difficulties, so we decided to turn to immigrant workers to fill certain positions. A few months ago, we hired our first employee from Morocco and recently hired another from Brazil.

We are in regular contact with integration assistance organizations in the Quebec City region. In November 2008, Symbiose took part in the international recruitment mission organized in France and Belgium by POLE Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches, Emploi-Québec and the City of Quebec.

Symbiose is firmly committed to hiring immigrants. We believe that this strategy will be the right one in terms of meeting our demand for qualified workers and enabling us to pursue our growth objectives.

### **Dary Morin**

President - Symbiose Technologies

[www.symbiose-tech.com](http://www.symbiose-tech.com)

## 1.6 Understanding the immigration process and visa requirements

All immigrants to Quebec must complete a lengthy process to obtain the required authorizations and visas.

Employers should familiarize themselves with the main steps in the process in order to determine the specific situation of prospective immigrants. You should also be familiar with the administrative procedures that must be followed if you wish to facilitate the hiring process.

### Did you know?

There are several categories of immigrants to Quebec.

*Permanent residents:* The individuals in this category are authorized to take up permanent residence in Canada.

*Temporary residents:* The individuals in this category are authorized to stay in Canada for a limited period of time. They may be temporary workers, foreign students or visitors (tourists).

*Refugees:* The individuals in this category have been granted asylum and are authorized to stay in Canada for an unlimited period of time (under the Geneva Convention or the UN Convention Against Torture).

### 1.6.1 Permanent resident visas

Immigration is a shared area of jurisdiction between the Quebec and Canadian governments. The Canada-Quebec agreement on immigration, which took effect on April 1, 1991, regulates the sharing of responsibilities. The immigration process is fairly lengthy: it takes from 12 to 18 months to obtain a permanent resident visa.\*

**\*This process may take longer for applicants from certain countries.**

The provincial government is responsible for:

- Determining the number of immigrants to Quebec
- Selecting candidates and defining the selection criteria
- Welcoming and integrating immigrants

The federal government is responsible for:

- Determining the total annual number of immigrants to Canada

- Defining and applying entrance and residency criteria
- Defining case processing standards and immigration categories
- Admitting immigrants into Canada

The permanent resident visa process may be divided into three stages subsequent to the preliminary evaluation.

### **Preliminary evaluation**

Prospective immigrants can complete a preliminary immigration evaluation form (évaluation préliminaire d'immigration/EPI), available online at [www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca), in order to evaluate their chances of being selected by the Quebec government. A faster response is obtained by using this online tool.

The selection factors for the qualified worker immigration program are as follows:

- Area and length of training and years of schooling completed
- Professional experience
- Age
- Knowledge of French and English
- Amount of time spent in Quebec and kinship with a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Quebec
- Relevant information about the accompanying spouse (as applicable)
- Financial stability

### **A) Selection by the Quebec government and the Quebec selection certificate (CSQ)**

Quebec is responsible for selecting prospective immigrant workers. Once the application form has been completed and submitted and the applicant has been selected, the Quebec government will issue an official Quebec selection certificate (certificat de sélection du Québec/CSQ), which is valid for three years.

### **B) Visa applications and admission of workers by the Canadian government**

The Canadian government is responsible for admitting prospective immigrants into Canada. Only applicants who have been pre-selected by the Quebec government will be permitted entry into Quebec by the Canadian government.

To qualify, selected candidates must apply for permanent residency and must successfully complete the following requirements (as must all other family members):

- Medical exam: candidates must undergo a medical exam prior to leaving their home country, as must all dependents
- Criminal background and security checks

### C) Confirmation of permanent residence

When the application is approved, the Visa Bureau will issue a permanent resident visa in the immigrant's name. This visa includes the confirmation of permanent residence and the entry visa, which must be presented upon arrival in Canada.

Permanent immigrants are divided into three categories:

- Family reunification immigrants
- Refugees
- Economic immigrants, including qualified workers, self-employed workers, entrepreneurs and investors

Source: MICC website

The visa application procedure consists of the following steps:



## 1.6.2 Temporary visas

Temporary immigration is also an area of shared jurisdiction between the Quebec and Canadian governments. The federal government's responsibilities are the same as for permanent visas.

The provincial government is responsible for:

- Jointly evaluating the proposed employment with the federal government
- Issuing the Quebec approval certificate (certificat d'acceptation du Québec/CAQ)

In association with Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC), Quebec is required to issue a ruling on the proposed employment's impact on the labour market as part of the approval process.

Therefore, individuals may work temporarily in Canada with a temporary entry visa, although they must first obtain a job offer from a Canadian employer; this offer must then be approved by the provincial and federal governments. Immigrant workers must also undertake to hold the position for the prescribed time period and must have the required skills.

### **Procedure for prospective immigrants**

Applicants must submit various documents to their prospective employer in order to have their temporary employment offer approved:

- A completed application form for the certificate approving temporary employment in Quebec (certificat d'acceptation du Québec/CAQ).
- The supporting documentation required to process the CAQ application.
- Payment of the CAQ application review fee.

If the job offer is approved, you are required to provide the employee with a copy of the confirmation letter, together with two copies of the CAQ issued by the MICC. The employee should keep one copy and send the other to Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

When immigrant employees arrive in Canada, they should present their work authorization and temporary resident visa to an immigration officer. The immigration officer will provide them with the application forms for a temporary social insurance number (SIN).

### **Procedure for prospective employers**

Prospective employers must follow the following procedure:

- Complete the HRSDC's foreign worker application and submit it together with the required supporting documents (as applicable) to the HRSDC-Service Canada centre (foreign workers).
- Submit the following documents to the MICC:

- A copy of the foreign worker application submitted to HRSDC and the relevant supporting documents.
- Payment of the fee for reviewing the temporary employment offer.
- The Quebec government's application for certificate of acceptance for temporary work completed by the foreign worker.
- The supporting documents required for CAQ application processing.
- Payment of the CAQ application review fee.
- The employer should apply for a work permit from the Canadian visa office that serves the foreign worker's country.

A special category has been established for information technology (IT) workers. Due to an acute shortage of qualified workers in Canada's software sector, the federal government has simplified the admittance process for workers whose skills are in high demand by the IT industry.

For further information, please visit [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca).

The employment authorization is not a contract. If the job duties change or if the employment is extended, employers are required to contact Services Canada and the MICC in order to obtain the required authorizations

### **Fees and processing times**

- Labour market opinion: no fee (processing times may vary from region to region).
- Foreign worker application: \$177 (processing = 5 days).
- Application for certificate of acceptance for temporary work: \$177 (processing = 5 days).
- Work permit: \$150 (processing times may vary by visa bureau).

For further information, please visit [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca).

Source: MICC website

### **1.6.3 Specific programs: working holiday program and youth mobility programs**

The federal government has signed youth mobility agreements with various countries. Canada may issue a 12-month temporary work permit to young people from these countries. Each country has an assigned quota, which, in certain cases, is allocated to specific programs.

The following table indicates those countries that have signed bilateral international youth mobility agreements with Canada, under which foreign visitors to Canada are granted temporary work permits.

Country	Working Holiday Program	Young Worker Exchange
Australia	Yes	Yes
Austria	Yes	Yes
Belgium	Yes	-
Czech Republic	Yes	Yes
Denmark	Yes	-
France	Yes	Yes
Germany	Yes	Yes
Ireland	Yes	-
Italy	Yes	-
Japan	Yes	-
Latvia	Yes	Yes
Netherlands	Yes	Yes
New Zealand	Yes	Yes
Norway	Yes	Yes
South Korea	Yes	
Sweden	Yes	Yes
Switzerland	No	Yes

Source: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade website, *In the Interest of Canadian Employers: A Win-Win Situation*: [www.international.gc.ca](http://www.international.gc.ca)

### Working Holiday Program

The Working Holiday Program (WHP) is an excellent opportunity for young people from foreign countries to visit Quebec or the rest of Canada for up to one year. It is geared towards young people seeking to engage in tourism and cultural discovery and hoping to gain work experience in Quebec or the rest of Canada.

Eligible individuals under the program are issued an open temporary work permit that does not require a specific employer. The WHP is not intended for student interns. Individuals can only take part in the program once; the work permit cannot be renewed or extended. Consequently, the work permit is not suitable for individuals seeking long-term employment contracts. Successful applicants are responsible for paying for their own airline tickets, insurance and all other travel and living expenses.

The procedures are straightforward: applicants must complete the appropriate form, submit the required documents (photos, photocopy of passport, proof of financial stability, résumé (CV), letter of interest and statement of bank account information) and pay the application fee by bank transfer (approximately €100 or \$150).

Successful applicants will receive a letter of authorization by email. They must then take out an insurance policy and present proof upon arrival in Canada.

Useful links:

[www.pvtistes.net](http://www.pvtistes.net)

[www.acs-ami.com/fr/info-voyage/visa-vacances-travail.html](http://www.acs-ami.com/fr/info-voyage/visa-vacances-travail.html)

### **Youth mobility agreement: training-oriented employment or professional development**

Additional agreements have been signed in the areas of youth mobility and young worker exchanges. These programs vary by country. The following website provides comprehensive information: [www.international.gc.ca](http://www.international.gc.ca).

In France, for example, the training-oriented employment program (“emploi de perfectionnement”) is geared towards young professionals hoping to acquire professional experience in a job with a fixed-term contract (18 months maximum). [www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca](http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca)

In Switzerland, a professional development program has been established for young people who have completed at least two years of professional training and who wish to undergo additional technical or professional training in their field under an employment contract (18 months maximum). [geo.international.gc.ca](http://geo.international.gc.ca)

For further information, please visit the embassy websites.

## 2.1 Training equivalency

To ensure effective recruitment, employers must take a closer look at the training programs in immigrant workers' countries of origin in order to grasp the broad outlines. In most European countries, the university system was recently harmonized and now closely resembles the North American model. In North Africa, the education system is largely based on the French model.

The following section provides an overview of the key criteria that you should be familiar with in order to evaluate the training of the candidates you interview.

### 2.1.1 Standardization of training in Europe

Under the Bologna Process, European governments have undertaken to develop a system guaranteeing a high-quality education across Europe. This process aims to create a European Higher Education Area (EHEA) by 2010.

#### **Bologna Process and the EHEA**

Under the Bologna Process, other goals are also being pursued, including the adoption of easily comparable degree systems, the introduction of a three-cycle system (bachelor's/master's/doctorate), student/professor mobility and recognition of qualifications and time spent studying.

The EHEA will provide Europe with a broader and higher quality knowledge base, in addition to building a knowledge-based economy and ensuring sustainability and greater consistency. It will also enable students to move between countries more easily in order to study or work.

Students may qualify for simplified recognition procedures. The standards for university degrees and quality assurance will be more compatible and more easily comparable throughout Europe.

#### **Training harmonization: three degree levels (bachelor's/master's/doctorate)**

The post-secondary education systems will have three degree levels: bachelor's, master's and doctorate (known as the "BMD system").

Programs of studies will be assigned a certain number of credits, which are accumulatable and transferable from one country to another (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System/ECTS): 180 credits for the bachelor's degree, 300 for the master's and 480 for the doctorate. The programs are divided into semesters: six semesters for the bachelor's and four semesters for the master's.

The notion of credits applies to all aspects of student training (courses, internships, projects, personal work, etc.).

## 2.1.2 Training comparison

Comparative evaluations of studies completed outside Quebec are general comparisons of two official education systems. They establish equivalence between degree programs and are for information purposes only. This service is provided by the Quebec Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC). The following website contains information on program equivalency in Chile, China, France, Morocco and Rwanda. [www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.immigration-quebec.gouv.qc.ca)

The Guide to Immigration Procedures for permanent qualified workers also contains comparative information on degree programs in 22 countries: Algeria, Argentina, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, China, Colombia, Egypt, France, Haiti, India, Iran, Lebanon, Mexico, Moldavia, Morocco, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, Tunisia, Ukraine, United States and Venezuela.

Guide to Immigration Procedures  
Appendix 3: Degree comparison table  
[www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=7&file=GPI\\_3\\_1\\_Annexe\\_3.pdf](http://www2.publicationsduquebec.gouv.qc.ca/dynamicSearch/telecharge.php?type=7&file=GPI_3_1_Annexe_3.pdf)

European BMD system				Years of study	
		Doctorate		9	
3 <sup>rd</sup> cycle				8	
				7	
				6	
2 <sup>nd</sup> cycle		Master's 2 Master's 1		5	
				4	
IUP 2		Bachelor's 3	Pro Bachelor's	3	
IUP 1		Bachelor's 2		1 <sup>st</sup> cycle	2
		Bachelor's 1			1

## 2.2 Salary conditions and living standards in the Quebec City region

When conducting interviews or drawing up employment contracts, you will certainly be required to answer immigrants' questions on salary conditions and living standards in the Quebec City region. It is important for newcomers to Quebec to know what their standard of living will be based on the proposed salary conditions.

The following information will enable you to provide a more quantitative response to immigrants' questions:

## Salary conditions and living standards in the Quebec City region

### Median annual income\* (2006)

Couples with or without children and single-parent families

Location	CDN\$
Canada	63,600
Quebec City	67,100
Sherbrooke	57,000
Montreal	60,800
Trois Rivières	56,900
Gatineau (Ottawa)	70,900

\*The median is the level that divides the population in two: 50% of the population has a higher income and 50% has a lower income than the median.

Source: Statistics Canada 111-0009

### Average annual income by household type (2007)

Household type	Total income (CDN\$)	Disposable income* (CDN\$)
Single person	31,255	26,039
Family	74,762	61,826
Couple without children (two incomes)	66,150	54,332
Couple with children (two incomes)	91,564	74,385
Single-parent family (headed by a woman)	39,347	36,669
Single-parent family (headed by a man)	60,302	49,318

\*Disposable income equals income after income taxes.

Source: Statistics Canada

## 2.3 Equivalent job titles

Job titles may vary in Quebec and in other parts of the French-speaking world. Be sure to use the correct terminology when recruiting and posting jobs on foreign websites.

Here are some typical examples: Quebec French: European French (English)

- Chef de la direction: directeur général (chief executive officer)
- Représentant aux ventes: commercial, technico-commercial ou vendeur (sales representative)
- Vice-président: directeur (vice-president)
- Directeur: responsable de service (manager/director)
- Conseiller: consultant (advisor/consultant)

In the technical fields (e.g. IT sector), there are a number of slight differences in Quebec, although they are universally understood. For further information, please consult the national occupational classification at [www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca).

**Each country has its own classification system.**

In France, for example, the applicable terminology stems from the official professional and socioprofessional categories (professions et catégories socioprofessionnelles/PCS). For further information, please visit [www.insee.fr](http://www.insee.fr).

## 2.4 Supporting organizations and associations

A large number of associations can provide assistance in matching up immigrant workers with your company.

The following organizations offer employment integration services:

- Voice of English-speaking Québec
- French Immigration and Integration Office (OFII)
- Centre R.I.R.E. 2000
- Groupe Intégration Travail
- Option-Travail
- Canadian Practice Firms Network
- Orientation and Integration Service for Immigrant Workers (SOIIT)

A list of services for immigrants is available on the City of Quebec's website: [www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/immigrants/](http://www.ville.quebec.qc.ca/immigrants/)

### Did you know?

The City of Quebec offers orientation sessions for immigrants who speak French or are enrolled in French courses, as well as for temporary workers.

#### Goal

The goal of the orientation session is to provide information aimed at facilitating daily life for immigrants in their new home city.

#### Location/running time

The sessions are held at Quebec City Hall. They run for half a day.

#### City of Quebec International Relations Office

2 Rue des Jardins

Quebec City, Quebec G1R 4S9

Phone: (418) 641-6777 Email: [relationsinternationales@ville.quebec.qc.ca](mailto:relationsinternationales@ville.quebec.qc.ca)

The **Emploi-Quebec website**, operated by the Department of Employment and Social Solidarity (MESS), offers a wealth of information on:

- The labour market in the province of Quebec and Quebec City
- Employment assistance services

The Quebec Association of Job Search Centres (Association des centres de recherche d'emploi du Québec/ACREQ) is a network of job search and professional integration centres providing assistance to employers. For further information, please visit: [www.cre.qc.ca](http://www.cre.qc.ca)

Various community organizations providing employment integration assistance operate a website designed to facilitate job searches and to provide information on services available in the Quebec City region: [www.inforgravail.qc.ca](http://www.inforgravail.qc.ca)

Also be sure to consult the Libre Emploi website, which offers one-time personalized assistance to jobseekers: [www.libreemploi.qc.ca](http://www.libreemploi.qc.ca)

The City of Quebec's website provides information on the integration of family members accompanying prospective immigrant workers.

The Quebec City Chamber of Commerce also operates a website: [www.emplois-immigrants.com](http://www.emplois-immigrants.com)

The MICC's website provides comprehensive information on visas.

## Testimonial

DMR, an integrative business and IT consulting company, has ranked among Quebec's market leaders since 1973. Leveraging their extensive business experience and in-depth knowledge of the high-tech sector, our multidisciplinary teams transform our client's goals into tangible results.

Our expert consultants have established a successful track record in the areas of integrated and innovative solution design, interim management and project management.

### **DMR: a global outlook**

To keep pace with its growth and address the shortage of qualified workers in its business segments, DMR considered the possibility of hiring immigrant workers and adapted its recruitment and employment integration tools accordingly.

Every year, DMR hires numerous immigrants, all of whom integrate rapidly into the company. DMR's employees form a mutually supportive group in which each member can develop in an atmosphere of respect and understanding and in which the contributions of people from different cultures are valued. DMR's workforce of 850 employees in Quebec City includes 111 immigrants representing 23 nationalities and countries from all continents:

- Africa/Middle East: Algeria, Ivory Coast, Benin, Congo, Senegal, Togo, Morocco, Tunisia, Mauritania, Lebanon

- Americas: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Venezuela, Colombia, Bolivia, Mexico, Haiti
- Asia: Vietnam, China
- Europe: France, Romania, former Yugoslavia

Individuals must be recruited from various countries in order to ensure effective integration and to reap the benefits of all available pools of expertise.

### **Customized recruitment policy**

Over the past decade, DMR has developed a variety of recruitment and integration tools. It also uses immigrant recruitment incentives: recognition of foreign work experience and qualifications, excellent salary conditions, numerous possibilities for advancement, etc.

To facilitate recruitment and encourage applications from immigrant workers with IT qualifications, partnerships have been entered into with various non-profit organizations based in Quebec City, including SOIIT, ANAEM, the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce and the MICC. We regularly provide these organizations with our job postings and closely review their candidate referrals.

Since most immigrants to Quebec arrive in Montreal, DMR has also forged links with non-profit organizations there, particularly Le Collectif and Promis. Through their regionalization programs, these organizations provide information on employment opportunities provincewide, in addition to referring participants to DMR and providing assistance during the preliminary process.

DMR also encourages its immigrant employees to provide referrals. They are the company's best ambassadors.

DMR's recruitment team includes a foreign-born advisor specializing in intercultural communications. The company also strives to eliminate obstacles to hiring (e.g. cultural biases and prejudices), particularly during interviews. Services are always available for individuals needing specialized assistance.

DMR uses its website and the print media to promote its mission and commitment to cultural diversity. In this regard, DMR took part in the launch of a calendar in 2008 promoting the hiring of immigrants and showcasing their contributions to Quebec companies.

Also in 2008, DMR expanded its recruitment program overseas and took part in three missions (Tunisia, France and Belgium). The first was organized by DRM, the second by ANAEM and the third in association with POLE Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches.

### **Ensuring successful integration**

At DMR, immigrant integration is a key concern. With the support of our senior management, employees and clients, a personalized orientation program has been implemented:

orientation day, company tour, regular follow-up with HR staff, production of a guide providing practical information on Quebec and the company, sociocultural “buddy system”, etc. DMR also supports prospective employees in the area of immigration procedures, particularly work permit applications and permanent resident applications. In addition, a mentoring program helps employees find their way in the workplace; several mentors have received intercultural communications training. DMR plans to train additional mentors in 2009.

DMR also offers integration workshops, together with French courses for employees whose first language is not French. The company also pays the tuition fees for employees who wish to take courses off-site. It should be noted that DMR also has staff who can provide writing assistance to immigrants who need it.

A multicultural group was created in the early 2000s to foster employees’ sense of belonging and to encourage interactions between DMR’s immigrant and non-immigrant employees, particularly mentors, project managers and other management personnel. Informal meetings are held throughout the year, including “5 à 7”, wine and cheese events, tastings of traditional recipes, musical performances, etc. The group started out with 20 people and has grown to 111 members!

DMR respects its employees’ cultural requirements and customs. For example, at social events, the company ensures that alternative menu items are available.

### **A resounding success**

The integration of immigrant workers at DMR has been a resounding success thanks to the openness of all employees. But the company has also taken concrete steps to bring in individuals of foreign backgrounds. In 2005, the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce presented DMR with the World Company award (31+ employees category) in recognition of its highly effective immigrant recruitment and integration policy.

This all means that immigrant employees can be successfully integrated. Numerous programs are available for organizations seeking support, particularly Emploi-Québec’s PRIIME program, in which DMR has participated from time to time. In addition to providing financial assistance, this program enables participants to receive support from specialized organizations such as SOIIT. Employment organizations, together with the MICC, Emploi-Québec, the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce and the City of Quebec, offer a broad range of services and programs aimed at facilitating hiring and integrating immigrants into the labour market and Quebec City. It’s up to us to tap into these resources with a view to opening the door to organizational growth.

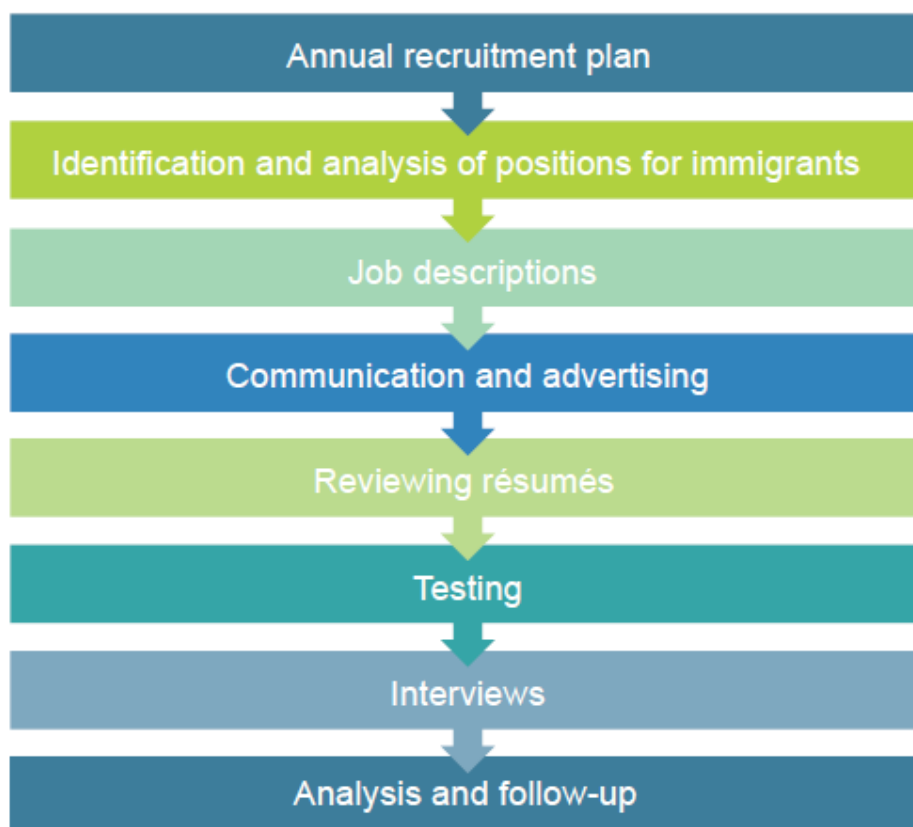
### **Annie Belisle**

Human Resources Director – DMR – Fujitsu Group  
[www.dmr.ca](http://www.dmr.ca)

## 2.5 Immigrant hiring process

To facilitate the immigrant hiring process, you must ensure that your recruitment efforts are effective. Effective recruitment is the first step towards successful integration.

The following diagram summarizes the various steps in the hiring process:



Within this process, we have listed the key aspects that should be emphasized when hiring immigrants.

### **Job descriptions**

Don't create barriers or establish overly restrictive criteria.

Identify essential skills and knowledge. Emphasize the skills and experience you are seeking. Refrain from recruiting based on intuition and personal values.

## **Communication and advertising**

The following list is not exhaustive; it is designed to assist you during the hiring process.

- Be sure to mention that your company supports:
  - Employment equity
  - Immigrant recruitment
- Consider asking your existing immigrant employees to provide referrals.
- Sponsor community activities.
- Contact immigrant integration organizations and Emploi-Québec.
- Advertise your job listings:
  - On employment websites
  - On your company's website
  - In magazines of interest to immigrants
- Facilitate the recruitment process by using:
  - International recruitment agencies
  - Regional foreign recruitment missions
  - Professional business networks such as LinkedIn and Viadeo.

## **Reviewing résumés**

- Be sure to recognize degrees/qualifications.
- Avoid cultural prejudices.

## **Testing**

If you have candidates take technical or psychometric tests, ensure that they are culturally significant and applicable. Tests should relate directly to the job description.

## **Interviews**

- Consider using a multi-member selection committee for greater impartiality.
- Evaluate the committee members.
- Provide the committee members with cultural diversity training.
- Ensure that interviews are structured, systematic and fair.

## **Analysis and follow-up**

Analyze and follow up on the proportion of immigrants who accept your employment offers. For those who do not accept an offer, try to determine why.

Many different obstacles and exclusionary practices may arise during the hiring process:

- Candidates may be excluded due to confusion surrounding foreign degrees, qualifications and training.

- Candidates may be excluded because they belong to a different cultural community.
- Candidates may be excluded because they speak a different language or have a different communication style.
- Candidates may be excluded due to lack of familiarity with different cultures.
- Candidates may be excluded due to prejudice.

## 2.6 Applying for financial assistance

To promote immigrant recruitment, various mechanisms have been established to provide companies with financial assistance or to facilitate the hiring of experts.

### 2.6.1 PRIIME program

Source: Emploi-Québec

Emploi-Québec's employment integration program for immigrants and visible minorities (PRIIME) aims to encourage small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Quebec to hire immigrant workers to meet their staffing needs and to support the inclusion and integration of immigrants in the workplace. It also aims to give newcomers their first experience of what it's like to work in North America.

To be eligible, the company and the immigrant employee must meet the following criteria:

- The employer must:
  - Be a Quebec-based SME with fewer than 250 employees.
  - Offer a regular full-time position (at least 30 hours per week).
- The immigrant employee must:
  - Have never previously held a position in his/her professional field or area of expertise in Quebec.
  - Have obtained his/her permanent residence permit within the past two years.

The PRIIME program is divided into four parts:

- Part 1: Acquiring work experience
- Part 2: Assistance
- Part 3: Adapting HR practices and tools
- Part 4: Adapting skills to the North American labour market

Part 1 – Acquiring work experience: a 50% salary subsidy for a 30-week period, up to a maximum of **\$7,500**.

Part 2 – Assistance: a grant covering up to 100% of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of **\$1,100**.

Part 3 – Adapting HR tools and practices: a grant covering up to 100% of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of **\$2,100**.

Part 4 – Adapting skills to the North American labour market: a grant covering up to 100% of eligible expenses, up to a maximum of **\$3,600**.

Each company may qualify for a maximum total grant of **\$14,300**.

For further information, please refer to Emploi-Québec's brochure: [www.micc.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.micc.gouv.qc.ca)

## 2.6.2 Tax holiday for foreign researchers and experts

Source: Quebec Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (MDEIE)

Quebec's tax system features various measures designed to encourage scientific research and experimental development (SR&ED), such as the tax holiday for foreign researchers, which was introduced in 1987.

The purpose of the tax holiday is to support employers seeking to recruit foreign researchers or experts who have outstanding records of achievement in their areas of expertise and who have the high-level skills required to carry out innovative projects.

Foreign researchers, experts, academics and post-doctoral students may qualify for a total or partial tax holiday on their salary if they meet the eligibility criteria.

- Foreign researchers must have the required skills to carry out SR&ED projects.
- Foreign experts must have relevant skills in the areas of management, innovation financing, international marketing or technology transfers with a view to optimizing the results of SR&ED projects.

The Quebec Revenue Department (Ministère du Revenu du Québec/MRQ) may grant foreign researchers or experts a provincial income tax holiday for a period of up to 60 months (100% for the first two years, 75% for the third year, 50% for the fourth year and 25% for the fifth year).

The Quebec Department of Economic Development, Innovation and Export Trade (Ministère du Développement économique, de l'Innovation and de l'Exportation/MDEIE) must issue a certificate of competence stating that the candidate has specialized knowledge of the fields set out in the applicable legislation. Certificate holders may apply for the provincial income tax holiday if the other criteria specified in the tax legislation are met. The employer and the employee are responsible for ensuring that all criteria have been met prior to submitting the application.

### Eligible employers

Eligible employers are persons or partnerships who operate a business in Canada and who engage in SR&ED activities in Quebec or have such activities undertaken on their behalf.

The program is geared towards foreign researchers and experts (regardless of citizenship) who are not residents of Canada prior to signing the employment contract or prior to taking up their duties.

The employer is responsible for ensuring that the candidate meets the tax residency criterion. The candidate must work exclusively or almost exclusively (90% or more of the time) for the eligible employer.

### **Foreign researchers**

Foreign researchers are required to exclusively or almost exclusively engage in SR&DE activities; these activities are not deemed to be SR&DE activities carried on at a university or research centre.

The employer must obtain a certificate of competence for foreign researchers issued by the MDEIE stating that the candidate has specialized knowledge of a field of pure or applied science or related area and holds a master's degree recognized by a Quebec university or equivalent qualifications.

### **Foreign experts**

Foreign experts are required to work exclusively or almost exclusively on an SR&DE project (either before, during or after the project is carried out).

The employer must obtain a certificate of competence for foreign experts issued by the MDEIE stating that the candidate has specialized knowledge of the field of management, innovation financing, international marketing or technology transfers.

### **Procedure**

The follow documents must be submitted to the MDEIE:

- The certificate of competence application form completed and signed by the employer:
  - Form for foreign researchers
  - Form for foreign experts
- The candidate's complete résumé (curriculum vitae), signed by the candidate, including a section on the candidate's publications and patents (as applicable).
- A certified copy of the relevant diploma (translated into French or English).
- A copy of the employment contract.

For further information, please refer to the brochure *General Information Guide: Tax Holidays for Foreign Experts and Foreign Researchers*.

## Did you know?

Every year, POLE Quebec Chaudière-Appalaches, the economic development agency for the Quebec City region, organizes three international recruitment missions, in association with Emploi-Québec, the MICC and the City of Quebec. These missions are organized using a country-specific approach (the 2008 missions were conducted in Belgium and France) or a sector-specific approach to keep pace with high demand for qualified workers in regional sectors of excellence.

For further information on these missions visit [www.1888mevoila.com](http://www.1888mevoila.com) or contact POLE at (418) 681-9700.

## Testimonial

At Systematix, our most important value is honouring our commitments to our consultants, clients and partners. We are a privately held company and all of our shareholders are active members of the management team. As a result, our processes are streamlined and our decision-making mechanisms are very efficient. We focus equally on people skills and individual know-how. Consequently, following 25 years working with a team of more than 200 consultants in Quebec City, we can safely say that our immigrant employees, who make up more than 20% of our project consultants, are one of our most valuable assets.

In 1996, Systematix began recruiting immigrants. Today, our immigrant employees come from 12 different countries spanning four continents: Western and Eastern Europe (44%), North Africa (26%), North, Central and South America (24%) and Asia (6%).

The steps we take to recruit immigrant employees include close cooperation with SOIIT, including our recent active role in their calendar project featuring “immigrants integrated within the workplace”. We have also conducted targeted missions with the assistance of employees from various foreign countries.

In November 2008, we decided to take part in the international recruitment mission undertaken in France and Belgium and organized by POLE Quebec Chaudière- Appalaches, Emploi-Québec and the City of Quebec.

At Systematix, whenever new immigrant employees join our team, we ensure that they are involved in client projects right from the outset and we “twin” them with a senior consultant. In addition to mentoring, the senior consultant facilitates the new employee’s integration into the Quebec labour market and provides background information on client practices, etc.

We also ask employees from the same cultural group to help newcomers broaden their understanding of Quebec customs and traditions. For employees who don’t speak French, we encourage them to take cultural integration and language improvement courses.

For us, cultural diversity is an asset and a source of strength that we’re proud of!

**Annie Bouchard**, Consulting Services Director – Systematix [www.systematix.com](http://www.systematix.com)

## Immigrant integration: a two-way process?

Integration is a two-way process: immigrant employees must integrate into their new company and employers must make an effort to adapt in order to facilitate their employees' integration. Both parties must seek common ground by identifying ways in which integration can be addressed in a spirit of reciprocity and mutual understanding. Around the world, fundamental patterns of behaviour and social attitudes turn out to be quite similar once we learn how to look past certain cultural differences.

Integration is an ongoing multi-stage process. Success hinges on an individual's personal characteristics, history and experience—these are the key factors that must be taken into consideration. You should also bear in mind that the pace of integration may vary from person to person and from culture to culture.

Other factors may affect the integration process, including age, education, training, reasons for immigrating, type of employment, etc.

Qualified immigrant workers may also face potential obstacles to integration stemming from:

- A lack of work experience in Canada.
- Administrative red tape stemming from the recognition and equivalency process for diplomas, training or professional qualifications.
- Language barriers.
- Social discrimination.

### Did you know?

The retention rate for immigrants to Quebec is over 75%. However, it is advisable to know the main reasons why some immigrants return to their home countries. They often cite difficulties with:

- Finding a job in line with their professional skills.
- Their spouse's integration.
- Adapting to cultural and social differences.
- Quebec's unique climate.

By closely monitoring the areas in which it can take effective action, your company will strongly increase the mobilization and retention of your immigrant employees.

## ***3.1 Factors influencing the successful integration of immigrant employees***

### **Keys to effective integration**

#### **Role of managers/supervisors**

Managers and supervisors have a role to play in promoting cultural diversity in the workplace. Hiring immigrants is not the whole story; they must also be integrated with a view to ensuring mobilization and retention.

First and foremost, you must have in-depth knowledge of your company's internal workings. Each company has a varying degree of tolerance for diversity, primarily depending on the organizational culture. If diversity is to be managed effectively, this culture may need to change and evolve. This involves a process of re-examination, leading to changes in attitudes and the elimination of any existing prejudices.

To facilitate the promotion of cultural differences within your company, senior management must take an active role.

The integration process should begin by analyzing and reviewing the following factors:

- Cultural values
- How work is organized
- Human resources policies

Next, the company's organizational structure and hierarchy should be reviewed. This is an essential step prior to implementing any changes.

The required changes should be implemented by management and carried out by the supervisory personnel. The latter will be responsible for managing cultural diversity within their work teams since they are in direct contact with immigrant employees.

#### **Role of the human resources team**

Changes must also be assimilated and integrated by the human resources team, which is responsible for promoting the company's core values by implementing appropriate policies and orienting and informing new employees.

In order to incorporate cultural differences into your company's values and organizational culture, compromise, flexibility and adaptability will be required. If your organization is flexible and proactive, cultural diversity will be easier to manage.

The manager's role is to facilitate team-based problem solving. Bringing together workers from different cultural backgrounds creates an environment that is conducive to creativity. In the end, companies benefit from new ideas and a re-examination of existing practices and procedures, generating a positive organizational dynamic.

Ideally, the re-examination of existing practices and procedures should provide a variety of opportunities to develop individual as well as group skills.

New management practices may be implemented using a skill-based approach combining individual work attitudes and group cooperation. Skills are not age or culture-dependent. Consequently, employees should be evaluated positively, not subjectively; skills are what count, not cultural differences.

Looking at differences from the perspective of skills is one way of getting work teams to view difference as an asset and to make progress together.

### **Testimonial: incorporating cultural diversity**

Momentum Technologies is a consulting firm specializing in Oracle and Java technologies. Since it was founded in 2003, it has hired a large number of immigrant workers. Due to rapid growth, combined with the shortage of specialized IT resources, nearly half of the company's workers are immigrants to Quebec, representing 19 different nationalities. Momentum Technologies' success in integrating immigrants was recognized by the Quebec City Chamber of Commerce in 2006 when it was presented with a World Company award (30+ employees category) and by the MICC in 2008 when it was presented with a Maurice Pollack citizenship award.

The main values underlying our success in integrating immigrant employees are openness, respect, communication, empathy and trust.

Our managers' openness to cultural diversity is important since they are the ones who embody our company's values. They are responsible for communicating this sense of openness to employees and clients and for ensuring that the orientation process for new employees is successful.

Respect is a core value at Momentum Technologies and accounts for our success in retaining immigrant employees. But respect is a two-way street: both guest and host must make an effort to adapt. Adhering to the company's values is important, but efforts to accommodate cultural differences cannot be allowed to interfere with the company's operations. Still, that doesn't mean that certain accommodations can't be made. For example, when we organize a "5 à 7" happy hour, we make sure that non-alcoholic beverages are available for our employees who do not drink alcohol for cultural reasons.

Listening is a very important part of the employee/employer communication process, particularly in the case of immigrant employees. There may be differences in terms of vocabulary and employees often tend to keep quiet if they don't understand something. That's when you have to show empathy—empathy enables you to anticipate certain problems that newcomers may be encountering.

In addition, establishing trust is the best way to get the most out of employer/employee relationships, although it may take a while. It's important to treat all employees fairly since trust can also disappear overnight.

In conclusion, the key to success lies in implementing effective human resources policies and applying them consistently with immigrant and non-immigrant employees.

**Michel Ganache**

CEO - Momentum Technologies

[www.momentumtechnologies.ca](http://www.momentumtechnologies.ca)

## ***3.2 Managing multicultural teams***

In a multicultural management context, the main difficulties often stem from misunderstandings, misapprehensions and stereotyping. Nevertheless, a multicultural workplace means that a wide variety of skills are available. In addition, diverging opinions and points of view can play a useful role in solving problems and fostering creativity.

Managers of multicultural teams must subscribe to the values of diversity. They must also promote these values and clearly demonstrate their relevance. Transparency and fairness are required in such situations.

Managers must also remain vigilant and take steps to address and overcome any difficulties or obstacles encountered by immigrant employees and other team members. This will result in optimal performance of immigrant employees and maximum company productivity.

Managers are also responsible for encouraging and generating dialogue, communicating, establishing trust and motivating their staff. Their supervisory role and management style will evolve over time; their approach should be based on a combination of advice, support, knowledge transfer and experience, including providing information on business practices in Quebec. This means that managers should incorporate cultural differences (with all their related benefits and obligations) into their day-to-day practices. Needless to say, they must respect cultural differences by being open, flexible, attentive and fair.

Individual management and administrative styles are crucial to immigrant employees' successful integration and retention. This largely depends on the effectiveness of managerial supervision, particularly direct supervision.

Solid interpersonal relationships will enable you to avoid short-term compromises. Key factors include employee motivation and mobilization, in addition to trust and problem solving.

To recap, managing a multicultural team is not easy—but if done correctly and with a structured approach, it can be highly beneficial to your company and will increase managerial job satisfaction.

You are advised to keep the following points in mind:

- Listen to the needs of your immigrant employees.
- Optimize your human resources practices.
- Take concrete and targeted steps to meet the needs of your immigrant employees.
- Adopt a skill-based approach.

### ***3.3 Implementing an effective orientation and integration program***

Most companies already have an orientation and integration policy in place for new employees, complete with formal goals. Such policies are usually multi-stage and include a detailed list of managerial and HR roles and responsibilities; they also set out orientation procedures. You are advised to adapt your policy by including a component dedicated to immigrant employees.

In so doing, you will help to ensure that your immigrant employees understand the company's organizational structure and their work environment with a view to achieving efficiency, autonomy and accountability in the short term.

As a second step, organizing an orientation day provides an opportunity to:

- Show new employees around the premises and various departments and introduce them to their co-workers.
- Go over the employee handbook, providing an overview of the company and its history, values and activities.
- Review any informal standards of behaviour.
- Introduce the resource person in charge of the “buddy system”, appoint an existing employee to serve as a buddy or create an orientation committee.
- Draft a mission statement describing what is expected of the employee and setting out formal qualitative and quantitative objectives.

As part of your orientation program, you could organize French classes for immigrants who have never studied the language or who have difficulty speaking it; fluency in French is one of the most important aspects of a successful professional integration. Language courses could be given one-to-one by private tutors or in larger groups, depending on the company's situation and budgetary considerations.

### ***3.4 Effective follow-up***

In all likelihood, your company already has a career management policy in place, together with annual evaluation meetings for your staff. In general, companies meet with new employees at the end of their probationary period and, more formally, after they have been on the job for a year. Everything is set down in writing; qualitative and quantitative objectives are established.

With immigrant employees, you are advised to follow up more regularly, particularly in the early stages.

The following sample timeline can be implemented with your management team:

- After one week
- After one month
- At the end of the probationary period
- After six months
- After one year (during a more formal meeting)

However, these interviews should be conducted as any other meetings would. Simply remain attentive to what your employees have to say, focusing on their vocabulary and phrasing to ensure that you have understood them correctly, and be alert to any signs of discomfort. You'll find that the results will be extremely positive.

### ***3.5 Buddy systems: a winning partnership***

One good way of integrating immigrant employees is to "twin" them with a resource person who will serve as the new employee's "buddy": someone the new employee can turn to in case of problems, doubts, difficulties or misunderstandings.

This strategy provides immigrants with valuable support in their efforts to integrate and contribute to the company's success.

Private meetings between the buddy and the immigrant employee should be held regularly with a view to significantly improving the employee's performance and integration. This relationship is characterized by openness to the other person's ideas and develops over the long term.

The buddy should have experience and should be familiar with the organization, its business practices and Quebec society. In addition to being motivated, they should be willing to offer their skills, knowledge and vision of the company in order to support the immigrant employee in achieving his or her professional goals.

The buddy is primarily responsible for:

- Providing encouragement
- Motivating the immigrant employee
- Transmitting knowledge
- Being available
- Answering questions
- Providing information
- Following up regularly

It is important to choose the right buddy and to ensure that they have the required qualities to carry out their role. Key qualities include:

- Openness, patience and humility
- Willingness to enter into a support-based relationship
- Communication and listening skills to ensure more effective interaction

### ***3.6 Developing a diversity training program***

Diversity could also be the focus of an in-house training program. Alternatively, your management team could sign up for training provided by specialized organizations.

The intercultural relations advisors at the Department of Immigration and Cultural Communities (MICC) organize a variety of educational and training activities focusing on immigration issues and diversity in the workplace. Topics include:

- Immigration to Quebec
- Cultural identity
- Relationships and intercultural communication
- Cultural aspects of management techniques used in Quebec
- Cultural issues surrounding employment and diversity management

These sessions are designed for groups of around 15 people and can be held on-site in your company's offices. You can also sign up for intercompany sessions.

For further information: [www.quebecinterculturel.gouv.qc.ca](http://www.quebecinterculturel.gouv.qc.ca)

### **For managers of multicultural teams**

Diversity training should focus on managerial expertise in a multicultural context and should give managers the tools they need to meet team expectations and maximize the benefits of cultural diversity.

### **For immigrants**

Diversity training should focus on knowledge of Quebec values and identity, cultural differences and current business practices in Quebec.

## **3.7 Effective communication**

Communication includes spoken language, in addition to facial expressions, tone of voice and the mode of communication. It may be direct or indirect. Communication methods can vary considerably from culture to culture.

For instance, in some cultures, looking someone directly in the eye is seen as a sign of respect. Other cultures prefer indirect communication, which some Quebecers may find frustrating even though it is the norm in certain countries.

The following guidelines should be communicated:

- Don't assume that your way of communicating is the right one. Ask yourself what is the most effective way of communicating. For example, you should pay attention to your body language and gestures, which may be interpreted differently by different people.
- Take the time to listen to what your immigrant employees have to say. Ask them to share their views and try to foster understanding by putting yourself in their place.
- Keep your prejudices to yourself and analyze the situation from a neutral position.
- Respect individuals' right to engage in communication or not.
- Don't assign blame if there's a breakdown in communication; take the initiative and try to re-establish dialogue.
- Intercultural communication improves with time and practice. Be patient.
- To expand your knowledge, find out more about other cultures and learn to appreciate the various facets of your immigrant employees.
- Use an appropriate level of language, especially if your employee's first language is not French. Don't hesitate to rephrase what you want to say if they don't fully grasp your message: check to see whether they understand. Conversely, ask your employees to repeat what they said if you don't understand them the first time around.

- Don't sharpen your tone or raise your voice—neither strategy will make your message clearer or more comprehensible.
- If you're telling a joke or a riddle, remember that certain aspects of Quebec culture and history, such as names of famous people, brands or places, may be unfamiliar to certain people.
- Be sure to use gestures: body language facilitates communication. Be attentive to immigrant employees' non-verbal messages.
- Adopt an attitude of mutual learning and linguistic exchange—this is a proactive way to create strong links. In certain cases, you could even correct grammatical, pronunciation or vocabulary errors kindly and diplomatically. Learning a few words of a foreign language can also facilitate communication with non-francophones.

### ***3.8 Organizing specific activities***

Fostering a sense of belonging in the workplace is a key part of mobilizing and retaining your employees. Your company should take steps to organize specific interactive activities in which employees can meet outside the workplace and exchange ideas and experiences. Employers can also use these activities to promote cultural diversity.

These activities can take the form of “5 à 7” happy hours, meals featuring international cuisines, presentations on immigrants' countries of origin, immigrants' accounts of their experiences, designing a multicultural calendar, organizing a cultural community day, exhibitions, photos/videos, music nights, etc.

Your company could also create an immigration committee, which could:

- Form an immigrant sponsorship group and organize activities aimed at assisting newcomers.
- Publish a special welcome message or immigrant profile in the company newsletter.

Your company could also contribute to the immigrant community by:

- Donating money to an immigration assistance organization.
- Supporting a local small business operated by an immigrant.

## Testimonial

EducExpert is a multimedia company focusing on online training and education in the fire safety sector. It was founded in 2001 to serve not only the Quebec market, but also the broader international firefighting community.

Given its international business model, the company has had a cultural diversity policy from the outset. We are open to cultural diversity and have hired a number of qualified immigrants.

These immigrant employees have been integrated within our work teams and they have adopted our management and administrative practices. Management soon realized the value of multicultural teams, which are sources of creativity and innovation and give us insight into international markets. Our employees represent various nationalities, including Canadians, French and Hungarians.

EducExpert has grown significantly in recent years. After gaining a foothold in the Canadian and US markets, we are currently developing our European operations out of our French office near Paris.

During this new stage in our development and following the decision to hire employees in France, we have had to adapt our communications, HR policies and business practices.

Our ability to enter into new partnerships overseas and the emergence of new international market opportunities are proof that the company made the right choice by embracing a multicultural workforce over the past few years.

**Luc De La Durantaye**  
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